

6
The Hijackers' Fate: 'You Can Run but You Can't Hide'

Transcript of White House News Conference on the Hijacking

Following is a transcript of the news conference by President Reagan at the White House yesterday on the apprehension of the hijackers, as recorded by The New York Times:

OPENING STATEMENT

Before making the announcement and the business that has brought me here, and knowing your great concern and not wanting you to lose any sleep at night, let me explain the patch on my nose. I figured you might ask. The doctor has been keeping track of me since the first operation for skin cancer on my nose and felt that there was some additional work needed. So yesterday afternoon, when we came back from Chicago, I went over there in the White House to the doctor's office and he did the additional work and a biopsy revealed there were some cancer cells. And now I have a verdict of my nose is clean.

So, listening to all the questions and comments regarding my thoughts on last night's events, I felt it might be helpful to take a moment here to make a comment, and then I'd ask Bud McFarlane to be here to provide answers to all the questions that you may have.

The events of the past 24 hours reinforce the determination of all of those who share the privileges of freedom and liberty to join together in countering the scourge of international terrorism. All civilized peoples welcome the apprehension of the terrorists responsible for the seizure of Achille Lauro and the brutal murder of Leon Klinghoffer.

'You Can't Hide'

The pursuit of justice is well served by this cooperative effort to insure that these terrorists are prosecuted and punished for their crimes. I want to point out the crucial role played by the Italian Government in bringing this operation to a successful and peaceful conclusion. Throughout, Prime Minister Craxi has been courageous in his insistence that those apprehended shall be subject to full due process of law. I also want to note my gratitude that the Government of Egypt was able to end the crisis without additional loss of life — although I disagreed with their disposition of the terrorists. And additionally, I wish to praise President Bourguiba's forthright decision to refuse the entry of the fugitives.

Most of all, I am proud to be the

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Danger for Americans

Q. Mr. President, does your action last night increase the danger for other Americans being held hostage in the Middle East?

A. I don't believe so. I don't think that there's any increase that could be made, I think that Americans are, as well as many other people from other countries — as was evidenced in the passenger list of that ship — are targets of continued terrorism.

Holding of Ship

Q. Mr. President, we were told you'd answer a few questions. If I might ask one: The Egyptians are apparently holding on to the Achille Lauro, the ship that the hijacking took place on. What do you know about that? Is there any tie to the fact that Italy is now holding the Egyptian plane? And what are you going to do to try to get that ship released? There apparently are still Americans on it.

A. I really don't know whether that is being held there for anything other than just simply it is berthed there at this time. I don't know whether the other passengers who were away from that particular — from Port Said, they're waiting for them to come aboard or anything. Whatever might be true of that, I just don't know.

Attitude Toward Egypt

Q. Mr. President, can you tell us about your attitude now toward Egypt? And can you tell us whether



AT THE WHITE HOUSE: President Reagan responding to final question as he ended his news conference on the interception of plane carrying hijackers by U.S. Navy jets. With him were from left: Robert C. McFarlane, national security adviser; Karna Small, National Security Council press spokeswoman; a Secret Service agent; Edward Djerjian of the White House press office and Donald T. Regan, White House Chief of Staff.

Commander in Chief of the soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines who deployed, supported and played the crucial role in the delivery of these terrorists to Italian authorities. They and the men and women of our Foreign Service and intelligence community performed flawlessly in this most difficult and delicate operation. They have my gratitude and I'm sure the gratitude of all of their countrymen.

These young Americans sent a message to terrorists everywhere, a message, "You can run but you can't hide."

Force One coming back from Chicago.

Q. You're telling us, sir, if I may follow up, you're telling us that Egypt then didn't know we were going to do it and didn't sanction it in any way?

A. Nor did the Italians know we were going to do it, as far as I'm aware.

Decision to Act

Q. Mr. President, you say the decision was made on Air Force One. Can you tell all of us exactly what you did on this yesterday? What went through your mind, what decisions exactly you made, and what it was like for you yesterday.

A. Well, I can't answer exactly on some of those things, on the decisions that were made. The operation as it was carried out was the operation that I ordered and approved of. But the reason I don't want to answer any more specifically in things of that kind is because terrorism and fighting terrorism is an ongoing thing. And again, as we've said before, I don't want to make public decisions that

we've made as to what we would or would not do in events of that kind because I think it's for the terrorists to wonder what we're going to do.

Q. But was it difficult for you, or easy for you? Can you give us some sense of your own state of mind?

A. I don't know whether a decision like that can ever be called easy, but I had complete faith in our forces. And the opportunity was there and I believed that the mission was possible. And I didn't think there was any way that I could not approve a mission of that kind with what was at stake.

President's Resolve

Q. Mr. President, what kind of message do you think this sends regarding your resolve? You've been criticized in the past for not taking action against terrorists. How does this fit the profile of what you think is possible, feasible, and what kind of message for the future?

A. Well, our problem in the past has not been a lack of will. Our problem has been in terrorist attacks that have taken place in the past. First of

all, in a number of them, such as the terrible tragedy with the marines, the perpetrators of the act went up with the bomb, they were suicides. So you couldn't — you were faced with, well, who were their collaborators? Who were behind them? How do you retaliate? They're gone.

And the other thing is in a number of incidents where, to retaliate would simply be an act of violence without any knowledge that you were striking the perpetrators of the deed, and you might be attacking many innocent people. This has been our great problem with terrorism. But here was clear-cut case in which we could lay our hands on the terrorists.

U.S. Intentions

Q. But since you know that these were the criminals and since you knew there were not innocent people around, were you prepared to fire? Were you prepared to shoot that plane down?

A. This, again, is one of those questions that I'm not going to answer. That's for them to go to bed every

Reagan Says Message to Terrorists Is 'You Can't Hide'

Continued From Page 1

officials were furious at Italy and Egypt for working with the Palestine Liberation Organization and agreeing to let the hijackers go free.

Asked if he was angry at President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, Mr. Reagan said the United States and Egypt had "too firm a relationship, and there's too much at stake with regard to peace in the Middle East for us to let a single incident of one kind, or a disagreement of this kind, color that relationship."

The four hijackers are in custody at the Sigonella military base near Catania, Sicily. Officials said that the initial American strategy was for the hijackers to be taken almost immediately from the base to the United States, but that Italy had refused to go along and kept the gunmen in custody.

Privately, some Administration officials voiced distress at the inability of the United States to gain control of the hijackers. Officials were especially concerned that the Italian Government, which has been friendly with the Palestine Liberation Organization, would fail to pursue leads possibly linking senior P.L.O. officials to the seizure of the hijacked ship, the Achille Lauro.

Some United States officials were also distressed about reports that the Italians planned to free, without detailed interrogation, the two Palestinians accompanying the hijackers. The two were identified by Israeli radio as Mohammed Abbas, head of the Palestine Liberation Front, to which the hijackers claimed to belong, and Mansi Al Hassan, a senior aide to Yasir Arafat, the chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Mr. Reagan, in his comments today, praised the American military, diplomats and intelligence officers for their

roles in the seizure of the hijackers. "These young Americans sent a message to terrorists everywhere," Mr. Reagan said. "The message: You can run but you can't hide."

'How Do You Retaliate?'

Responding to a question about his "resolve" in future terrorist incidents and the criticisms against him for failing to act in the past against hijackers, Mr. Reagan said, "Our problem in the past has not been a lack of will."

He said there were a "number" of problems, "such as the terrible tragedy with the marines, the perpetrators of the act went up with the bomb, they were suicides."

"How do you retaliate?" He was referring to the bombing of the United States Marines barracks in Beirut in October 1983 in which 241 American servicemen were killed.

"The other thing," Mr. Reagan continued, "is in a number of incidents to

retaliate would simply be an act of violence without any knowledge that you were striking the perpetrators of the deed, and you might be attacking many innocent people."

"That has been our great problems with terrorism. But here was a clear-cut case in which we could lay our hands on the terrorists."

Asked if he was prepared to shoot down the plane carrying the hijackers if necessary, Mr. Reagan said, "That's for them to go to bed every night wondering."

Mr. Reagan flew later in the day to the Presidential retreat at Camp David, Md., for the weekend.

Asked at the news conference if his decision to send the American planes on their mission was a difficult one, Mr. Reagan said, "The opportunity was there and I believed that the mission was possible. And I didn't think there was any way that I could not approve a mission of that kind with what was at stake."

night wondering.

Extradition of Hijackers

Q. Mr. President, on extradition, will you press to extradite the terrorists to the United States if the Italians do give them what you consider to be justice, knowing that there is no capital punishment in Italy?

A. We think this is a proper thing to do because — I'm not a lawyer and I don't intend to get into too many legal areas where I might be caught short, but it is — they could be tried in both countries. And in this country they would be tried for murder, where in Italy they will probably be tried on the basis of piracy because of the taking over of the Italian vessel. So this is why we have put in a request for extradition.

Trial in Italy

Q. Well, do you want two trials or will you be satisfied if the Italians give them, say, a long prison sentence?

A. That remains to be decided as to how far we go or as to how far we pursue this. What we want is justice done.

Q. Does that mean death to the hijackers?

A. Well, I'm just going to say "justice done."

Disagreement With Craxi

Q. Mr. President, there were reports that — there has been reported that there was disagreement between yourself and Prime Minister Craxi about the disposition of these terrorists, whether to be tried, where to be tried, is there any truth to that?

A. No, we had a phone call last night. He told me what his situation was with regard to them and I told him what ours was. And I told him that we would introduce extradition request. He told me what their legal process was with regard to that, that it wasn't something that he could just give an opinion on itself, any more than I could on this if the situation was reversed. And no, we had full cooperation.

But now I think if you are finished — I know there are many hands and I'm going to turn them all over to Bud McFarlane.

President's Nose

Q. Well, can you just talk about your nose, Mr. President? Forgive us, but what kind of finding the biopsy had, what level of cancer.

A. I thought I answered that. There were some cancer cells found and now, following, after the examination following the minor operation, there is such that, as I say, I can stand before you proudly and say, "My nose is clean."

Q. What do you mean, cancer cells found yesterday? Or are you referring to the original spot?

A. No, there were a few found yesterday. This was, as I say, the doctor felt that there was additional work that he needed and wanted to do.

Other American Hostages

Q. Are you concerned that this act may endanger the other six American hostages, that the action taken yesterday may endanger the other six?

A. I have no way of knowing that, what they're thinking. All I know is that we are still doing everything we can, and investigating every channel we can, to try and get back the other six hostages.

Diagnosis on Nose

Q. Can you tell us whether it was basal cell or a melanoma, sir, can you tell us the diagnosis?

A. I heard the term — I'm not medical, I'm not a lawyer and I'm not medical, either. But I did hear the term basal cell.

Relations With Egypt

Q. Are you angry at President Mubarak for his conduct in this whole affair?

A. No, as I say, we disagreed but we have had too firm a relationship between our two countries, and there's too much at stake with regard to peace in the Middle East for us to let a single incident of one kind, or a disagreement of this kind, color that relationship.

Egyptian Statements

Q. Did he not lie about the whole matter? Did he not lie about where the hijackers were to the United States?

A. I have no way of knowing that, or knowing what facts he had.

Q. Did the Egyptians in any way assist you in this operation?

A. No. As I say, we did this all by our little selves.

People in Custody

Q. Mr. President, are you satisfied that all the perpetrators are in custody?

A. I don't think any one of us can answer that, we have no way of knowing that. We know that the four that were on the ship were the ones that perpetrated the crime. Very obviously, they are part of a splinter group from the P.L.O. and have their own goals and aims, and how many were involved in planning or supporting such a mission of this kind we don't know.

Calling Klinghoffer Family

Q. Have you called the Klinghoffer family yet, sir?

A. That is what I'm going to the office to do and you're making me late.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President.

Q. Of the Palestinians on that plane, one of them is said to be one of the murder experts for the P.L.O., who has organized many raids of this type.

A. All of these things I think will be answered in the investigation leading to prosecution.

Q. Thank you, sir.

Find your world in ours.

The New York Times

FOR HOME OR OFFICE DELIVERY CALL 1-800-631-2500

The Hijackers' Fate: A Threat in Beirut

Caller Says U.S. Will Pay If Harm Comes to Hijackers

By IHSAN A. HIAZI
Special to The New York Times

BEIRUT, Lebanon, Oct. 11 — An anonymous caller told a Western news agency here today that the United States would "pay dearly" if the hijackers in Italian custody were harmed.

The caller, who said he was from the Palestine Liberation Front, the group linked to the hijacking of the Italian cruise liner Achille Lauro, urged the Italian Government to free the hijackers and two other Palestinians who had been taken into custody in Sicily with the hijackers. The six were on board an Egyptian plane that was intercepted over the Mediterranean by jet fighters of the United States Sixth Fleet and diverted to Italy early today.

The call was made as many Palestinians from two districts of southern Beirut were showing intense interest in reports broadcast over the radio about what would happen to the six men seized aboard the Egyptian aircraft.

"We do not approve of hijacking planes or ships," a shopkeeper who lives in Shatila said, "but the American action against our guerrillas has laid the United States interests and citizens open to retaliation."

"Pledge Has Been Broken"
The shopkeeper, 45 years old, who called himself Abu Mahmud, said the hijackers had been given a word of honor that they would be assured safe passage to their destination. "The pledge has been broken," he said, adding, "All the Palestinians are victims of broken promises."

In the nearby Sabra district, an armed man behind an earthen barricade was listening to a commentator say over the radio that the diversion of the Palestinians to Italy "is bound to cause more tension not only between America and the Palestine Liberation Organization but between Egypt and Washington as well."

The gunman, who said his name was Bilal, said, "Perhaps this will give Egypt and the rest of the Arabs a lesson never to trust America."

The camps are effectively under the control of the Palestine National Salvation Front, a grouping of six guerrilla organizations that are based in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and oppose the P.L.O. chairman, Yasser Arafat.

One of these organizations is a Lebanon-based faction of the Palestine Liberation Front that is led by Tawfik Yacoub and is allied with Syria. The hijackers have been reported to have taken to a rival faction of the Palestine Liberation Front — one that is based in Tunisia, is allied with Mr. Arafat, and is led by Mohammed Abbas, also known as Abu Abbas.

Backing for Arafat
Mr. Arafat is known to have wide backing among the estimated 400,000 Palestinians in Lebanon, about half of whom live in 14 refugee districts in Beirut and other parts of the country.

Representatives of the main guerrilla organizations are believed to have re-established themselves in the Moslem part of the capital in the three years since most Palestinian guerrillas were forced to leave the country under

pressure of the Israeli invasion. With the exception of those of the Palestine National Salvation Front, guerrilla officials operate here under a cloak of secrecy.

"Fighting Israel and its allies, especially America, transcends inter-Palestinian differences," said Ali Wariyah, a 14-year-old Palestinian boy who said he was studying at the United Nations school at Shatila. Asked if he would soon be a guerrilla, he said, "All Palestinians are commanders."

The man who called the Western news agency spoke Arabic, and reporters who took the call said the clarity of his voice indicated that the call had been made in Beirut. They said also that his voice sounded the same as that of a man who telephoned earlier to take responsibility for the hijacking of the Achille Lauro on the part of the Abdul Abbas faction of the Palestine Liberation Front.

Denial of Slaying
The caller was quoted as saying today, "The United States and its interests in the Middle East and around the world will pay dearly if any harm befalls any of the six detainees."

He said the hijacking had not been directed against civilians and denied that any passenger on board the ship had been killed, despite the slaying of an elderly American from New York, Leon Klinghoffer.

The caller did not identify the six Palestinians who were captured on the Egyptian aircraft, but Arab radio stations said they included Mr. Abbas and a senior Egyptian lawyer, Youssef Abu Khalid, as well as the four hijackers. Detention in Italy would make Mr. Abbas the most senior Palestinian guerrilla official ever to be captured by a foreign country.

Political analysts here said the arrest of the hijackers would be a major blow to the Palestine Liberation Organization, however unpopular Mr. Abbas may be among some Palestinians and other Arabs.

U.S. Houses Cited
A Lebanese editor who did not want to be identified said, "We will wake up one day and learn that the Palestinians had taken Italian or American hostages and asked to exchange them for those seized on the Egyptian aircraft."

The editor added, "I wonder how this episode would affect the Americans already held hostage."

He was alluding to six United States citizens who are believed to be held as hostages by the Palestine Islamic Front, a group of Islamic Holy War fighters who have been reported to have disappeared in West Beirut in the last two years. Earlier this month, the Islamic Holy War issued a statement to the press here saying that it had "executed" one hostage, William Buckley, a political officer at the United States Embassy.

The statement said he had been killed to avenge the lives of Palestinians and Tunisians who died in the Israeli air raid that destroyed the P.L.O. headquarters in Tunis on Oct. 1. The Islamic Holy War said it would use the United States of complicity in the Israeli attack.



SECURITY PRECAUTION: U.S. soldiers inspecting a car at entrance to military airbase in Sigonella, Sicily, as security was increased there after diversion of plane carrying hijackers.

Egyptian Airliner Heads for Rome

By HENRY KAMM
Special to The New York Times

SIGONELLA, Sicily, Oct. 11 The Egyptian airliner forced by American fighter planes to land at this Italian-American air base shortly after last midnight took off tonight, almost 24 hours after it landed, bound for Rome.

Aboard were, according to state television, two officials of the Palestine Liberation Organization, as well as Egyptian diplomats and armed Egyptian security agents, all of whom accompanied the four hijackers of the Italian cruise ship. The Italian Government considers them important witnesses in its judicial inquiry.

Unidentified Italian officials at the Sigonella air base were reported by state television to have said that the hijackers themselves were transferred late tonight from military custody on the base to civilian judicial authorities. The most likely authority would be the investigating magistrate's office in the nearby city of Siracusa.

The carrier-based American fighter planes that intercepted the jetliner on its flight from Cairo to its supposed destination of Tunis were assumed to have returned to the aircraft carrier Saratoga immediately on completion of their mission.

Tight Security
All day, tight security and a complete black-out made the air base a place of mystery and rumor, for a constantly increasing flow of reporters and television teams and ordinary citizens. Italian and American officials maintained silence on all questions.

From the yard of a winery on the confines of the airfield, about 15 miles from Catania on the east coast of Sicily, the white Boeing 737 bearing the red and gold stripes of the Egyptian national airline could be

viewed at a distance of more than 1,000 feet. It was parked in a remote corner of the field, in an area said to be restricted to Italian use.

There was no suggestion that anyone but Italian officials have had access to the hijackers since the American planes forced the Egyptian jetliner down in Italy.

Until the plane took off shortly after 10 P.M. (5 P.M. Eastern time), only occasional cars of the Carabinieri, the national police force under military command, were seen in its vicinity until it was refueled late this afternoon preparatory to takeoff. No passengers or crew seemed to have remained aboard.

The American and Italian militaries turned back all visitors at the various entrances to the base, and military and civilian police blocked roads ringing it, allowing no observation of activity inside.

Members of the Public Information staff of the Defense Department have referred all questions to the Defense Department, volunteering as the only information they were authorized to disclose the telephone number of the Pentagon's public affairs office. Questions on the functions and meaning of the air base, they would disclose no more than that it was a naval installation.

Sigonella is a base under North Atlantic Treaty Organization command consisting of separate American and Italian installations. About 5,000 members of the American military, as well as their families, are stationed here. More than 1,000 civilian employees of the Defense Department also work at the base.

The heavy American presence is accompanied by the rows of car-sales agencies, insurance offices, moving companies and places of entertainment with American names and signs in English that mark the surroundings of American bases in Europe and Asia. It has conferred a smattering of English on Catania's shopkeepers and taxi drivers.

BOMB KILLS LEADER OF U.S. ARAB GROUP

Seven Injured in Explosion at
Offices on West Coast —
J.D.L. Praises Action

SANTA ANA, Calif., Oct. 11 (UPI) — A bomb demolished the offices of the Arab-American Anti-Discrimination Committee today, killing the organization's regional executive director and injuring seven other people.

The explosion, at 8 A.M., blew out windows on the second story of the three-story office building, scattering glass on the sidewalk and in the street. Fire Chief William Reimer said.

Alex Odeh, regional director of the Arab group, died in surgery about 11:30 A.M. at Western Medical Center. Mr. Odeh, a resident of Orange, was 37 years old. The seven people who were injured were treated and released.

No one claimed responsibility for the bombing.

The Arab-American committee is a Washington-based organization founded in 1980 to combat racial stereotypes that Americans of Arab descent say have led to discrimination against them.

Threats Tended Not Uncommon

Joseph Hakek, publisher of the Glendale-based New Circle magazine, which specializes in Arab-American affairs, said it was not uncommon for the organization to receive threats.

"You have people that don't want others to talk and they threaten them," he said.

The Jewish Defense League, often at odds with the group, denied responsibility for the bombing but praised the action.

Irv Rubin, chairman of the J.D.L., said Mr. Odeh had been interviewed on television about the slaying Tuesday of Leon Klinghoffer, a 38-year-old tourist from New York City who was held hostage aboard the hijacked ship Achille Lauro in the Mediterranean. Israel has linked the hijacking to the Palestine Liberation Organization.

"Odeh appeared on television to whitewash the P.L.O. murder of Klinghoffer," Mr. Rubin said. "No Jew or American should shed one tear for the destruction of a P.L.O. front in Santa Ana or anywhere else in the world."

Adjacent Buildings Evacuated

The police evacuated buildings on both sides of the office building that was bombed, and demolition experts searched for more bombs.

Agents from the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms were investigating the explosion, said John Hoos, an F.B.I. spokesman.

Dino Tunos, a carpenter working in the building next door to the one that was bombed, said he saw the blast and ran into the building to help the victims.

"When I ran upstairs, the whole place was torn apart," Mr. Tunos said. "When I looked at it, I realized it was an explosion and we started getting everyone out."

Officials said the Federal death penalty law is limited to killings aboard hijacked airplanes — not hijacked ships in certain circumstances. The law provides a maximum penalty of life imprisonment for taking a United States national hostage anywhere in the world.

Under international law, an Italian ship is Italian territory for purposes of criminal jurisdiction. The United States acknowledges this but claims to have "dual jurisdiction" over the crime because Americans were taken hostage in violation of the 1984 law.

"Both the case law of the United States and longstanding principles of international law permit a sovereign nation to extend the reach of its criminal laws beyond its territorial borders to protect its recognized national interests," the Justice Department statement said.

But contrary to statements by President Reagan Thursday and today that the hijackers could be tried here for the murder of Leon Klinghoffer of New York, department officials said there is no provision for prosecution for the murder of an American on a foreign ship.

And, contrary to a statement by Mr. Reagan Thursday that the hijackers would face "capital punishment" here, officials said the Federal death penalty law is limited to killings aboard hijacked airplanes — not hijacked ships in certain circumstances.

Thus, officials said, the fact that Italian law and the extradition treaty would bar extradition to the United States of the hijackers for the execution here is irrelevant to the case.

U.S. Team Heads for Sicily
One department official said that a Criminal Division lawyer, Kurt W. Mueller, and a team of Federal Bureau of Investigation agents were headed for Sicily to do some of the investigative work necessary to support a formal extradition request.

He said he could not be sure how soon such a formal request, which must be supported by a criminal complaint and evidence to establish the identities of the hostage-takers and other key facts, could be ready. United States officials have urged Italy's Government informally to extradite the hijackers.

Aside from the law against hostage-taking, the Justice Department said, "other possible offenses under consideration include piracy under the law of nations" and conspiracy to commit a Federal crime. The penalty for piracy is life imprisonment, and that for conspiracy is five years.

Italy More Likely Than U.S. to Try Suspects in Hijacking of Cruise Vessel

By STUART TAYLOR Jr.

WASHINGTON, Oct. 11 — Officials here and in Italy said today that the four hijackers who apparently killed an American hostage on an Italian cruise ship would most likely be tried in Italy, rather than the United States.

Later today, two Administration officials and another source said a major issue for both countries in dealing with the matter was what would be done with two Palestinians who were on the plane taken to Italy along with the four hijackers.

One of the two is reported to be Abu Abbas, a top official of the Palestine Liberation Organization who was the faction of the Palestine Liberation Front that supports Yasser Arafat, the P.L.O. leader. The Israeli Army radioed the other as Hani al-Hassan, a senior aide to Mr. Arafat, but that report was disputed and could not be confirmed.

United States officials suspect that the hijackers who boarded the ship were acting under Abu Abbas's orders, although their original mission was not to hijack the ship but to disembark in Israel and carry out a terrorist attack.

Italy's Foreign Minister was reported to have said today that the two would probably be released. Officials

here were discussing whether to seek extradition of Abu Abbas and the other man, along with the four hijackers, and to extradite the two to Italy to hold them for questioning.

"We are prepared to try to convince them that there is enough evidence given us to justify holding them," a Justice Department official said of Abu Abbas.

Another official said "the real question here is whether we put a full court press on Italy to extradite them." He said there was some concern that the Italians, who have been on friendly terms with the P.L.O., might not aggressively pursue evidence implicating an official so close to Mr. Arafat.

But more senior Justice Department officials said they had a good working relationship with and confidence in Italian authorities.

Pressure From Egypt

The situation was complicated by the fact that while the Egyptian plane that carried the four hijackers was still in Italy today, the hijacked ship was still in Egypt. Egyptian officials said they were apparently putting on a lot of pressure for release of the two Palestinians.

"We frankly don't care much what happens to the plane or to one of the two individuals," the official said, "but we care very much about the other." Abu Abbas, who was reportedly killed in the Israeli air raid that destroyed the P.L.O. headquarters in Tunis on Oct. 1, the Islamic Holy War said it would use the United States of complicity in the Israeli attack.

happens to the plane or to one of the two individuals," the official said, "but we care very much about the other." Abu Abbas, who was reportedly killed in the Israeli air raid that destroyed the P.L.O. headquarters in Tunis on Oct. 1, the Islamic Holy War said it would use the United States of complicity in the Israeli attack.

President Reagan said the four hijackers could be tried in both countries and he and other officials said they would press for extradition of the hijackers from Italy, which now holds them. But Mr. Reagan added that at this point, all options are being preserved.

Charges in Italy
The prosecutor's office in Genoa, Italy, where the ship began its cruise, charged four Palestinians today with murder, kidnapping, hijacking the ship and possession of arms and explosives, according to news reports from Genoa.

Mr. Speakes said this morning that an extradition request would be filed with the Italians "in the next several hours." But a Justice Department official said this afternoon that the necessary groundwork, including gathering of evidence, probably could not be completed today.

Obstacles to Extradition
Italian officials said today that they wanted to prosecute the hijackers and were unlikely to extradite them. Government lawyers here said there would be legal obstacles to obtaining extradition, especially after a trial in Italy.

One obstacle is a provision in the extradition treaty between the two countries that would bar Italy from extraditing the hijackers after they had been convicted or acquitted in Italy "for the same acts for which extradition is requested."

Government lawyers said it was unclear whether this provision would leave room for Italy to try the hijackers for piracy and murder, for example, and then extradite them to the United States for trial on the separate charge of hostage-taking.

A statement issued by the Justice Department said: "Whether the suspects will eventually be tried in the United States, or in Italy, or sequentially in both countries will depend on legal considerations that are yet to be resolved. At this point, all options are being preserved."

When the United States Navy F-14 jets forced the Egyptian Government Boeing 735 to divert from its course to Tunis and land in Sicily at the Sigonella air base, the United States did not know that the two Palestinian officials were aboard, the Administration officials said.

This added a new complication. Earlier, the United States had agreed reluctantly to allow the Italians to take the lead in prosecuting the hijackers. But when Washington learned that Mr. Abbas was aboard the Egyptian plane, it urged the Italians to make an effort to detain the two Palestinians so that they should be charged, too.

Justice Department officials said that they were urgently examining the possibility of trying to extradite Mr. Abbas, who is accused of masterminding many terrorist acts in Israel, as well directing the seizure of the Achille Lauro, in which Leon Klinghoffer, a 38-year-old New York resident, was killed.

When the Egyptian plane landed Thursday night, the Egyptian officials aboard the 735 apparently ordered the four hijackers to the Italian authorities, but refused to submit the two Palestinian officials to interrogation.

As a result, the two Palestinians and the Egyptians remained on the plane throughout the night into today in what amounted to a standoff, the officials said.

There were reports late today that the Egyptian plane was flying to Rome. The whole affair is threatening to erupt into another divisive issue between the United States and both Italy and Egypt.

The United States has urged the Italians to undertake a thorough investigation of the two Palestinians to see if they, along with the four hijackers, should be prosecuted, State Depart-

ment officials said.

But the Italians, who found themselves suddenly with the hijackers and the two Palestinian representatives, have not seemed enthusiastic about detaining the latter two, American officials said.

The Original Plan
In discussing the interception, Administration officials said that the original plan was for the four hijackers to be transported almost immediately from Italy to the United States to stand trial here.

They said that a United States Air Force transport was at the Sigonella air base in Sicily ready to take the gunmen.

But Prime Minister Bettino Craxi, in subsequent discussions with President Reagan and other American officials, insisted that Italy should deal with the hijackers since the crimes occurred on an Italian ship.

Associated Press
HELD IN SICILY: Mohammed Abbas, head of the Palestine Liberation Front, which has been tied to hijacking.

News Conference: Trade Legislation

Continued From Preceding Page

GATT, the general tariff program, to join with us in another round of trade talks to again eliminate whatever holdovers there are of discrimination against someone else's products getting into their country or subsidizing sale at less than production cost in other countries. These things we'll do and we'll do vigorously.

But just plain protectionism, let me point out another problem that no one has considered: You take one product of that kind, and you look at a list of countries and then you find out we're the biggest exporter in the world, and you find out that in some of the countries if we punish them for that one product, we happen to have a trade surplus in that country. And how can they stand by on the one thing they're exporting successfully and then say but we're buying more from you than we're selling in your country. So, there just is no excuse for protectionism that is simply based on legitimate competition and curbing that competition.

A. Well again, protectionism is a two-way street. And there is no way that you can try to protect and shield one industry that seems to be having these competitive problems without exposing others. No one ever looks

over their shoulder to see who lost their job because of protectionism. We do know the history of the Smoot-Hawley Tariff and what it did, there were over a thousand economists that sought the President out at the time and begged him to veto that bill.

But in this one with a single industry, if there is an unfairness and we've already made that plain and made it evident, we are going, if they're taking advantage in some way in another country, competing unfairly with us, we're going to take action on those items. For almost two years now, I have been begging our allies and trading partners in the GATT, the general tariff program, to join with us in another round of trade talks to again eliminate whatever holdovers there are of discrimination against someone else's products getting into their country or subsidizing sale at less than production cost in other countries. These things we'll do and we'll do vigorously.

But just plain protectionism, let me point out another problem that no one has considered: You take one product of that kind, and you look at a list of countries and then you find out we're the biggest exporter in the world, and you find out that in some of the countries if we punish them for that one product, we happen to have a trade

surplus in that country. And how can they stand by on the one thing they're exporting successfully and then say but we're buying more from you than we're selling in your country. So, there just is no excuse for protectionism that is simply based on legitimate competition and curbing that competition.

Legislation on Trade

Q. Mr. President, if the current bills which are on the Hill now seeking sweeping trade protectionism were enacted, do you foresee somewhat of a re-enactment of Smoot-Hawley which led to the Depression or certainly deepened it — do you feel there is a cause and effect there?

A. I don't know, I think there are probably some individuals that haven't learned the lesson or haven't lived long enough to have been around when the Great Depression was on. That's one of the advantages of being a kid my age.

Q. Do you think the rose will be the national flower?

**Commodities
Monday through Friday
in Business Day
The New York Times**